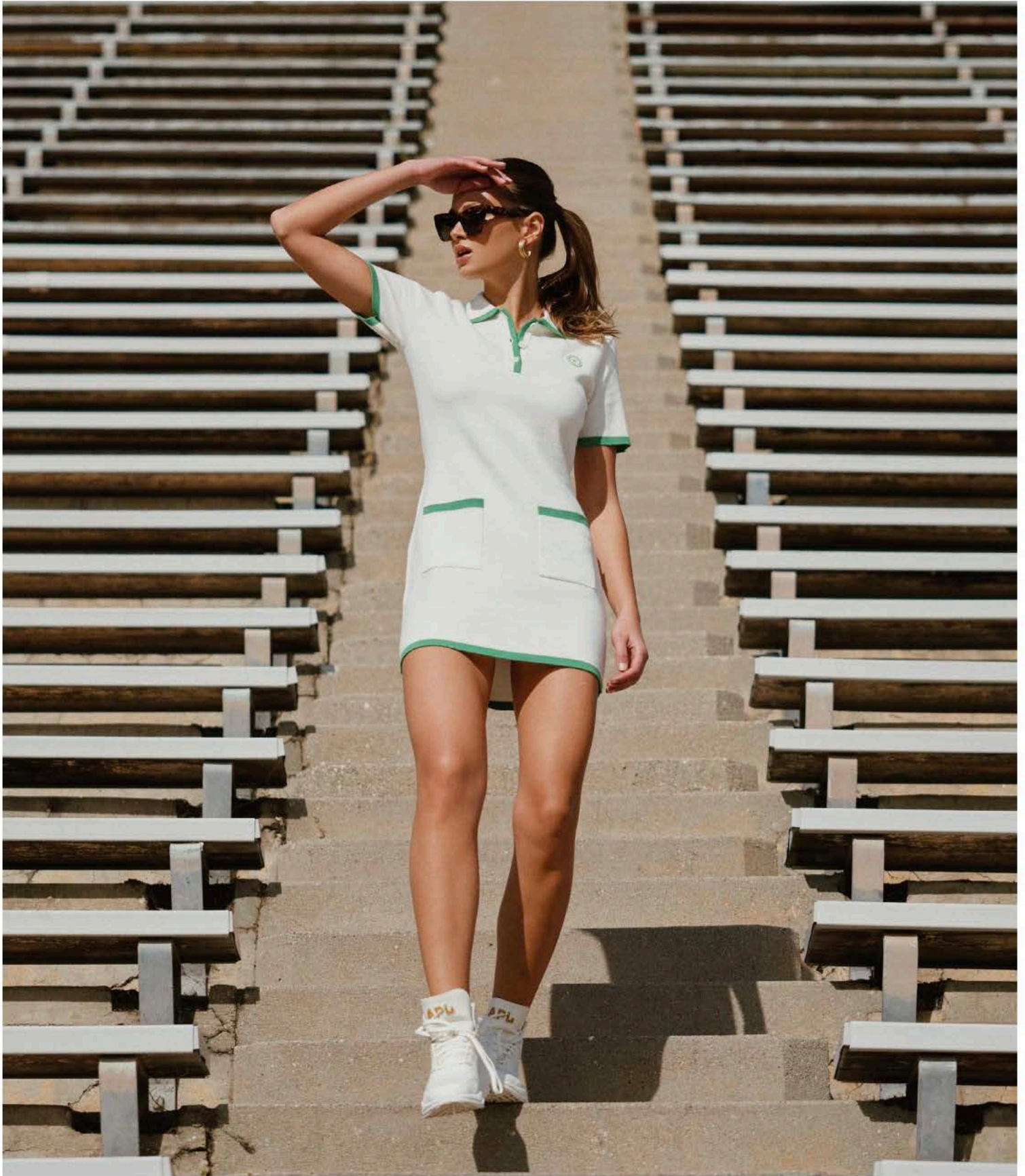


SBLS

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FRESH START

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*EMBRACE A EUROPEAN DEFINITION OF WELLNESS
THROUGH PLUNGE-POOL DIPS AND SELF-
REFLECTION AT KALESMA AND NOÛS*

BY *Bennett DiDonna*

Having spent most of my life in Southern California, I grew up convinced that the pillars of wellness were juice cleanses, hot yoga, and beachfront meditation sessions. But after moving to Europe last year, where wellness appears to mean lunchtime pastries rather than alkaline kale smoothies, I've realized that I might need to broaden my understanding. And so, on a recent trip to the Greek islands of Mykonos and Santorini, I took the opportunity to revisit and lean into all that is well.

It's a warm afternoon in Mykonos as I step off the plane and into the fall sun. After a quick ride to Aleomandra, a peninsula on the southwest of the island, I find myself at the entrance to Kalesma, where I will be spending the next couple of nights. Made up of 27 suites and villas, Kalesma forms a mini mountain-side village of chic bungalows, overlooking the bay of Ornos. While it's the end of the season, the island is still brimming with life, boho restaurants, and beach clubs, all of which are easily accessible, but quite frankly, make this quiet reprieve all the more desirable.

I have a general rule when I travel that I try to spend at least eight hours of the day outside of my hotel, exploring a city, hiking in the countryside, or visiting a nearby beach. But after opening the door to my cycladic-inspired Rick Owens-furnished suite, I scramble to find the room service menu as I don't think I'll be leaving until checkout. As the sun begins to set, I take a dip in my private plunge pool, looking out at the sea as beautiful shades of orange and pink flutter overhead.

Feeling a million miles away from it all, I head to Kalesma's sleek courtyard restaurant, Pere Ubu. As is the vibe throughout the Studio Bonarchi and Studio-K designed property, Pere Ubu is effortlessly cool, featuring contemporary Greek-focused farm-to-table fare alongside a top notch cocktail and wine program. Before I can even order, I am plied with olives and cheese, followed by a delicious cod dip, and as a main, the octopus, which is finished on the large outdoor grill.

Opting to leave my blinds open, given the total privacy that Kalesma's layout offers, I wake up to the sunrise, and take the opportunity to have an early morning dip in the pool. Beneath the indoor-outdoor lobby and boutique, I head to the hotel's gym for a workout. But before I can even get a coffee in, I feel wide awake following a visit to the spa's sauna and mercilessly frigid cold plunge. While the concierge team can help facilitate rides, tours, and reservations across the island, I opt to catch a short five-minute ride down to Ornos beach in one of Kalesma's fleet of Land Rovers.



With a few beach clubs to choose from—the kind with cushy chaise lounges and umbrellas, not DJs and shots of 1942—I lay my towel down and immediately hop in the clear blue water. After a swim in the bay, I get a ride back up to Kalesma for a rejuvenating afternoon treatment at the hotel's spa, which boasts a line of products from Dr. Barbara Sturm. Later that evening I make my way back to Pere Ubu for another stunning meal of fresh shrimp and grilled artichokes, and, because why not, a late night swim under the moon.

The next morning, before I catch my ferry, I take a bit of time to reflect on the rhythm of work, workout and relaxation, which has left me well?...well. A feeling I continue to ponder during my scenic three hour island-hopping ferry trip, until arriving at the dramatic volcanic island that is Santorini. I take a short ride to Mesaria, a town near the edge of the Santorini caldera, and make my way to NOÛS, a sleek resort from the YES Hotels group inspired by the island's landscapes. With 119 rooms and bungalows, NOÛS, is one of the island's largest hotels, yet still manages to maintain an elegant and calm ambiance.

As I head to my room, I pass by the lake-sized pool at the center of the property as well as a few of the 160 site-specific works from contemporary Greek artists on display. I drop my bags off in my light-filled room and can't resist taking a dip in my private plunge pool (somewhat inconceivably, my second in two days). As the afternoon begins to fade, I take a short journey to Fira, the island's hillside capital. Overlooking the sea,

I watch a stunning sunset on the horizon, which feels like a collective moment of reprieve and reflection throughout the town.

The following morning I wake up and visit the hotel's state of the art gym before visiting the NOÛS Spa, which is rooted in the spirit of Ef Zin, or the Greek idea of wellbeing and self-care. The striking architectural complex includes an indoor-outdoor pool, cold dip, sauna, and hamam along with several treatment rooms, where I head for a revitalizing deep tissue massage. After enjoying a bit of time in the verdant oasis-like area of the hotel, I decide to visit Perissa, one of the island's iconic black sand beaches. The team at NOÛS can help to arrange private transport across the island, but I opt to take the local bus, which is easy to navigate, and dropped me at a breathtaking near empty beach, the warm water I float in for the rest of the afternoon.

That evening back at NOÛS's flagship restaurant Elio's, I enjoy a fresh caught branzino from the Italian-leaning menu along with a salad of some of the island's famously sweet tomatoes. With a crisp glass of white wine from a vineyard down the road in hand, I sit for a moment to reflect on the trip. While I recognize that a daily dip in a private plunge pool may not be a realistic part of my wellness routine, the rhythm of movement and relaxation, eating well, but not being afraid to indulge a bit, embracing the solo, the collective, the simple, feels like a lifestyle. And like travel at its best, it's a lifestyle that continues to linger with you long after returning home.*

“As the sun begins to set, I take a dip in my private plunge pool, looking out at the sea as beautiful shades of orange and pink flutter overhead.”



NOÛS

KALESMA

